

In reply please refer to _____ and date of this letter.

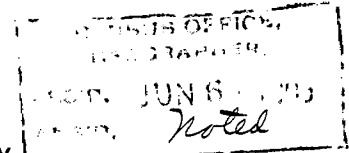
Kobuk

Address all communications to
"Director, U. S. Geological Survey,
Washington, D. C."

SUBJECT:

Kowak versus Kobuk

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



WASHINGTON, D. C., Oct. 10, 1902.

Mr. Marcus Baker,

Secretary U.S. Board on Geographic Names,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I would again call attention to the desirability of substituting the name Kobuk for Kowak for the river tributary to Kotzebue Sound in Alaska. The name Kowak was apparently first used by Lieutenant Cantwell in his report on explorations made in 1886. Lieutenant Cantwell was the first man to map the river from personal observations. As a matter of fact, however, the river was first located approximately by Mr. John Simpson, Surgeon of H.M.S. Plover in 1850. Simpson explored the head of Hothan Inlet and Selawik Lake. He located one of the delta mouths of this river which he called the Kowuk and also obtained some information in regard to it from the natives. A map embodying the results of his geographic results accompanied his paper which was published as a Parliamentary Paper, Great Britain, Session February 3, 1852, Vol. L. As far as publication goes therefore, the name Kowuk would seem to have precedence.

I have talked with Mr. Townsend of the Fish Commission, who accompanied Lieutenant Cantwell in his exploration, and he assures me that the river was pronounced Kowuk or Kobuk by the

1

natives and does not know why Kowak was published in the report. There is no question whatever about the native ending to the name of the river. It is uk and not ak. The middle vowel is sometimes given a b, sometimes a v sound, and sometimes between the two. Mr. Lopp, Missionary at Cape Prince of Wales, told me that some of the natives called it Kobuk and others Kovuk.

In 1898 upwards of a thousand prospectors visited this region and as far as I know they all accepted the native name Kobuk. In this form the name of the river has appeared on several maps published privately. *On the map in my possession it is printed* Mr. Mendenhall who explored and surveyed the river during the past season, also reports that the name Kobuk is universally accepted. I have myself made many inquiries from prospectors and natives of that region and have never found one who used the name Kowak and many of them had no idea what river this name was applied to.

Unless this change to Kobuk is made it will lead to unutterable confusion. I would also call attention to the fact that in a recent map published by the United States Geological Survey the name of the river appears as Kobuk. (See report on Coal Resources of Alaska.)

Very respectfully,

100th Meeting March 12 1902

"The case of Kowak river, Alaska, was at the request of Messrs Brooks and Mendenhall of the U.S. Geological Survey, brought up by the Secretary who moved that the name Kobuk be adopted in place of Kowak as appears in the Alaskan Dictionary. The motion was lost."

Spencer B. Smith
Geologist in charge of Geologic work in Alaska.